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AUTHOR Sladky, Paul
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ABSTRACT

Generally speaking English department faculty respond very differently when reading freshman writing than when reading most other kinds of writing. Mina Shaughnessy has pointed out that "ordinary readers" try to understand what they are reading, but the writing teacher, "like a lawyer examining a client's document for all possible ambiguities and misinterpretations, tries to see what keeps the paper from being understood or accepted." It is this focus on materiality that provokes a hesitation to classify a teacher's "reading" of a student text as an act of reading, per se. On phenomenological grounds, it seems more accurate to call it an act of meta-reading. Teachers do not read student texts to peer through them as much as they raise evaluative lenses to peer at them, an intention that causes the shift from a phenomenological reading stance to an evaluative meta-stance. One means of shifting the type of reading to which freshmen essays are subjected would be to publish these essays. By publishing student writers, the communicative purpose of writing is emphasized and the socially symmetrical conditions that invite students to participate in the academic discourse community are reinstated. At "College X" freshman essays are published in "Choice Voice," which is edited by freshmen and which has an eager and willing audience, in this case, 400-600 students who enroll each quarter in English 101. On the practical side, publication does not require extensive hardware or financing. A bulletin board and staples are an effective way to start. A data file on the campus computer network is invaluable. (TB)

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ED 371 352

Paul Sladky

Why We Need to Publish Student Writers

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Augusta College
Augusta, Georgia

It isn't news to most English teachers that student writers are capable of writing powerfully and well, nor that, for the most part, they usually don't. Yet, I suspect that most of us can recall particular pieces of student writing that we might describe as, if not stunning, at least memorable, those moving, unfamiliar and deeply insightful essays that show up in the stack every now and again. If only we knew why they appear so infrequently, we might know how to spark their genesis.

Maybe it is a fact that good student writing, like Haley's comet, is only visible when geo-cognitive forces are properly aligned. Or perhaps the naysayers are right: the problem is with our students. If only they were better prepared, better disciplined, better read, etc., etc., etc., then the texts they write would look vastly different. Nevertheless, I believe we cannot escape the dilemma without shining the analytic light upon our collective teaching practices and the cultural assumptions we bring to our readings of student texts. How do we in the English Department read those texts? And how do our reading practices effect what students write? It is my contention that the discourse contexts we construct in our classrooms, the audiences and purposes we create for student writers, the readers we provide and the expectations that we, as teachers of writing, bring to the rhetorical situation are all tangibilities that students must work with and through to produce the moving and memorable prose we want them to produce.

In this article, I would like to analyze these tangibilities and consider their influence on not just the writers but also on the texts they write. My goal is to align some of the most prominent variables to solidify a rationale for how we can create

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new discourse contexts that instantiate new audiences, purposes and expectations for student writers and that help them generate more fully committed and, consequently, more rhetorically successful texts. I begin with a theoretical interlude that establishes a framework for my analysis and end with a consideration of the pragmatics involved in activating a program that uses writing-for-publication to construct a discourse context for student writers in the Freshman composition program.

Writing-for-Publication: A Theoretical Framework

It seems safe to say that, as writing teachers, we do a lot of things with the words our students produce, from analyze to interrogate to coach, critique and, finally, evaluate nearly every word that's written in our classrooms. What is interesting, however, is that rarely do we actually read those words. I mean read them as readers, not teachers, read a writer's words, for the gift of their insight and their meaning. If Patricia Bizzell and others (Bartholomae; Bazerman; Bruffee) are right in assuming that our purpose in Freshman composition is to initiate students into the academic discourse community– what Kenneth Bruffee calls the "Conversation of Mankind"– it is even more interesting that we in the academy seem to carry on our conversation yet rarely let the "new kids on the block" have a turn to talk.

Of course there are occasions. But generally speaking, we behave in the presence of student writing quite differently than we behave in the presence of writing that counts in our lives, our own professional discourse, for instance, or whatever other reading pleasures we indulge-- Toni Morrison, William Faulkner, Octavio Paz, even the morning Op-Ed page. This distinction derives, in part, from

the purposes that we as readers bring to the texts we read and the expectations those purposes give shape to, all of which raises a legitimate question: if our purpose isn't to read our students' writing, then what exactly are we doing with it?

In spite of the absence of theoretical consensus in the English Department these days, I would venture one almost universally shared assumption: Freshman writing is read primarily for the purpose of improving it. When we as English teachers read Freshman essays, the rhetoric of our reading purpose shapes the transaction in very specific ways. Doug Brent has recently proposed a rhetorical model of the reading act in Reading as Rhetorical Invention: Knowledge, Persuasion, and the Teaching of Research-based Writing that converges with my analysis of how teachers read student texts. My starting point is the claim that we read as "teachers" very differently from the way we read as "readers" and that this difference is embedded in the rhetoric of our reading stance.

As teachers, we approach student text as a material object. The text itself dominates our attention in ways it doesn't when we read the work of Morrison, Faulkner or Paz. With published professional discourse, we as readers engage the material text only long enough to move through it and arrive, phenomenologically, someplace else. Unconsciously, we see beyond the linguistic scramble of words, signs and orthographic conventions that constitute the material surface of the text and willingly enter a sphere dominated by meaning. When we read student texts, however, we unconsciously see the object as a linguistic scramble of words, signs and orthographic conventions, materially impenetrable not because it is inherently recalcitrant or 'untranscendable,' but because our 'readerly' intention fixes our gaze upon the material object in a way that determines its ontology.

In Martin Nystrand's description, a fluent reader "peers through the printed page, finding only meaning" (76), an act by which the written, material surface of the text becomes transparent and the reading self dissolves into what Nystrand calls "textual space" (82), that confluence of consciousness and meaning where language projects a universe into consciousness and consciousness into a universe beyond which nothing else exists. Although Nystrand focuses more on the psycholinguistic process in terms of a reader's fluency, my focus is the rhetorical process that subsumes the "peering" (or not peering) "through the printed page" as a function of the reader's rhetorical intention.

Although the phenomenology of reading and the interactive dynamics involving writer-reader-text are considerably more complex than this, the point I wish to make concerns, first, how reader intention influences the reader's phenomenological experience and, second, how reader intention determines the ontological status of the text.

Mina Shaughnessy has pointed out that "ordinary readers" try to understand what they're reading, but the writing teacher, "like a lawyer examining a client's document for all possible ambiguities and misinterpretations, tries to see what keeps the paper from being understood or accepted" (84). It is this focus on materiality that provokes my hesitation to classify a teacher's "reading" of a student text as an act of reading, per se. On phenomenological grounds, it seems more accurate to call it an act of meta-reading, a move that captures an important and dominant aspect of the "teacher-reader/student-text" transaction, namely, the reader's talk about the text and its rhetorical-linguistic features rather than entry into its textual space. Teachers don't read student texts to peer through them as much as they raise evaluative lenses to peer at them, an intention that causes the shift from a phenomenological reading stance to an evaluative meta-stance.

Let me offer an example. My five year-old daughter regularly writes pages of "squiggles" in her notebooks-- very neatly ordered marks that lack any conventional orthographic or linguistic structure, that is, no "words," but nevertheless burst with meaning when she and I sit on the couch and read the stories they signify. Psycholinguistically, it seems a stretch to call this "reading", but from a social perspective, it isn't at all. A social dynamic very clearly unfolds around the squiggle text and enables us, reader and writer, to experience a phenomenal transformation into a version of Nystrand's textual space. We come to the text expecting a phenomenological transformation, and consequently a page of scattered marks becomes "The Chinchilla with Chicken Pox," a story that enters our family literature.

We might consider classic literary examples in the same way, the "Benjy" section of Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, for instance, or the entirety, perhaps, of Joyce's Finnegan's Wake. What motivates readers to persevere (or, just as frequently, not persevere) in a textual universe where their position is never fully secure and the writer purposefully seeks to frustrate that security? One explanation is rhetorical: the reader's intention when approaching a literary text is embedded in a social rather than a strictly textual dynamic. Readers persevere because their rhetorical purpose motivates them to persevere in spite of difficulties that semantic and syntactic decoding might present.

This social-textual dynamic plays out in numerous other ways, as well. In "The Phenomenology of Error," for example, Joseph Williams discusses the problem of readers' biased perceptions of surface error and provides a window on how reader intention significantly affects the reading experience. With published professional discourse, Williams shrewdly illustrates how readers bring an expectation for meaning and a perceptual latitude for 'error' that we don't bring to

written student discourse. Since the writer is Professor of English and Linguistics at the University of Chicago, we barely flinch when we confront the following sentence in his CCC article: "Idiots we have more than enough of in our state institutions." When Williams later reveals that he has deliberately inserted over 100 errors of grammar and usage in the article, it comes as a mild surprise. Our expectations, shaped by our rhetorical stance, has lead us to unlock the textual space that Williams intended to create, that phenomenal sphere in which readers seek and find meaning instead of error.

The teacherly approach to student texts in the classroom, however, is something altogether different. Rather than a reader rhetoric dominated by the phenomenological "meaning-stance" I've just described, teacher response to error is embedded in the evaluative meta-stance of instruction, a stance that has come to function as an unmarked universal so thoroughly woven into the fabric of our cultural practice that in the classroom configuration, we forget that the primary purpose of writing is to be read by readers, not merely coached, critiqued and evaluated by teachers to "tighten" the text or "catch" the error. It is the phenomenological stance assumed by real readers that is so crucially absent in the strictly student-teacher interaction. Although the concept of audience has occupied a prominent position in the hierarchy of rhetorical theory for 2500 years, its translation into classroom practice has remained seriously problematic, even in curricula based on the most sophisticated social-theoretic. We may preach the intricacies of writing for real audiences, but creating discourse situations where students engage such audiences remains a stubbornly persistent problem.

My argument for publishing Freshman writers falls out from a rationale for loosening this hegemenous grip of the evaluative meta-stance by instantiating audience as an actual rather than purely theoretical entity for our students. By

opening the airwaves to let student writing be read by real readers, we engage students in genuinely communicative discourse acts that invite meaningful contributions and encourage readers to read with different, and arguably more authentic, purposes.

We must consider how student-writers come to understand and model their writing processes when the social context in which they write is so consistently dominated by an audience that meta-reads rather than reads a text to experience its meaning. We might pose the question like this: if meta-readers in the composition classroom aren't reading what students write, then, from the student writer's point of view, exactly what kind of writing is it?

Recent composition theory begins with the assumption that writing is a negotiable form of social action, a position with a taproot that wends its way through centuries of rhetorical topsoil turned first by Aristotle. Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor have proposed an audience-response model of writing, for instance, postulating that "all writing is directed towards an audience and is to be regarded as the written medium of transaction" (250). Audience is a sine qua non in rhetorical models, making it a fairly standard theoretical assumption that we measure the success of a text by its effect on readers rather than by its conformity to formal standards. Yet, in spite of strong arguments for rhetorically situated models of composing, the practical success of these models can only be measured by asking: where is the audience that our students write for? While it may be true in the universe of discourse outside the composition classroom that writers engage genuinely negotiated transactions with authentic readers, inside the composition classroom students know that such transactions are purely fiction.

Once again, we face the problem of authenticating audience for student writers. Short of asking them to write letters to Congressional representatives or

local newspaper editors, the question persists: how do we create for our students genuine audiences situated in genuine rhetorical situations? As Walter Ong has pointed out, the ability to "fictionalize" an audience is an essential writerly competence (17). Although Ong's theory may help us rationalize a solution, it certainly doesn't solve the audience problem. Fictionalizing the properties of a reader is something vastly different from fictionalizing the existence of a reader.

Consider the typical directive that accompanies a Freshman writing assignment. It goes something like this: "Imagine you are writing for an audience of your peers, your employer or someone who knows as much or as little about X as you know." The fiction inherent in this directive is, of course, obvious: students are writing for readers who do not exist at the same time they are asked to pretend that the teacher-- the one analyzing and assessing the text-- is not a reader, or worse, that the teacher is a reader when, in fact, the teacher isn't reading the text at all but meta-reading it to analyze and assess its linguistic and rhetorical properties. James Britton, Victor Villenueva and Robert Brooke, among others, have discussed this problem of the "double bind."

Because teachers define, initiate, and evaluate almost all written discourse produced in a composition classroom, Britton points out that students understand very well how teachers "read" their writing: they "see the teacher's response as a means by which [they] are being charted, part of a larger and more elaborate system of making judgments, not simply a question of the reader's pleasure or insight" (64). Britton goes on to discuss how school writing, on the one hand, "appears to be normal transactional writing," and on the other hand, "behind the apparent transaction there lies another [purpose], that of showing the teacher that what he [or she] has taught has been learned" (104). Given the cultural problematics that surround any school-sanctioned discourse act, we must ask: to what extent has

instructional purpose come to outweigh communicative purpose in the writing our students produce?

The sad corollary of the fact that composition teachers don't genuinely read student writing is that no one else does either. Occasionally, of course, a parent, roommate or spouse is granted reading rights, but overwhelmingly, student texts are reduced to the status of inconsequential artifact almost as soon as they are written. They fulfill the writer's purpose of "getting a decent grade" and then are lost, discarded or left in boxes in our hallways at semester's end, unread by readers of any ilk.

I'm certain the question has already arisen in your mind: but what about peer response and collaborative learning models where students regularly engage each other's texts? Although both models have created important new discourse channels in the composition classroom, phenomenological criteria expose how they function under the rubric of meta-reading rather than reading. Peer response, at bottom, is predicated on the notion that peer readers play roles normally assumed by the teacher, thus enhancing a more supportive environment for writers. Although it is considerably softened, peer readers nevertheless maintain an evaluative meta-stance as they coach, critique and help each other improve their texts-in-process. The core logic of peer response replicates the logic of the meta-stance: rather than reading to negotiate meaning of the text on its own terms, the peer reader's objective is to help the writer move the text to someplace other than the place it is. Once again, the reader reads to find ways to improve the text. Peer response and teacher response thus differ primarily in terms of power, not purpose. One evaluates formatively while the other evaluates formatively and summatively. Yet both, in essence, meta-read the text against its potential rather

than for its meaning, and thereby sidestep the most crucial aspect of the reader-writer transaction: negotiated entry into textual space.

The question thus remains: if no one is reading the completed texts that students write, then what is the status of those texts? If the finished products are only meta-read, what happens to the writer's purpose? And, perhaps most importantly, at least from the writer's point of view, why in the world are these essays being written?

Let me pose the question in slightly different terms: if what our students write isn't genuinely read, then can we truly call it writing? To claim that students in Freshman English do not write, we would have to assume that meta-reading, by virtue of its non-negotiable conditions and non-phenomenological stance, is not, as I have argued, 'authentic' reading. Furthermore, we would have to reason that, for writing to occur, what has been written must have been written for readers who will authentically read the text. On these grounds, to assume that our students write in Freshman composition is a non sequitur shrouded in emotional appeal. The mystification of cultural practice has lead us blind: we believe that our students are writing because we've always believed that our students are writing.

It is possible to reason that our Freshman composition students do not write, but they, like us, breathe mystifying clouds and believe that they are writing. Their words, after all, are written products of a graphemic technology that produces written words, therefore they must be writing. Yet, if the words they write aren't fully read, we can also conclude that their discourse is only fictionally rather than genuinely communicative. James Britton classifies writing produced in the school setting for such narrow instructional purposes and audiences as a "dummy run," not genuinely communicative discourse at all.

The seminal study that Britton and his colleagues published in 1975 goes much deeper in revealing that student writers write for an uncomfortably narrow range of functions and audiences in the school setting. Britton's data showed that 48% of the time, the relationship between student writer and audience was "pupil to examiner;" 39% of the time it was "learner to teacher;" and 1.8% of the time it was "writer to readers" (Britton et al. 130). That's 1.8% of the time that students were writing to communicate in genuinely negotiable ways with an unknown audience. Should it be surprising that Britton's call in 1975 was to expand the audience for student writers? Perhaps more shocking is the fact that almost twenty years have passed and, for the most part yet, we haven't. In spite of theoretical headway with social models of discourse, we still have students writing overwhelmingly to one audience for one reason: to learn how to write. What writing-for-publication seeks to do is establish a broader motivation for writers: to communicate with readers (as they learn to write).

The most surprising aspect of the proposition that students do not write in Freshman composition is the extent that composition teachers and program directors become implicated. By not providing our students with genuine readers to write for, it's as if we've affixed an invisible cultural warning to our writing assignments and curriculum: HANDLE WITH CARE. FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

By fictionalizing the existence of readers, we in fact shrink the actual discourse context to student and teacher, stripping away the interactive social dynamics that a developing writer must learn to negotiate. We claim to "teach" students that writing is a socially situated act, yet, to the extent that our classrooms resemble those that Britton described, the discourse situation we provide students does not support their truly learning what socially communicative discourse is.

As Mitchell and Taylor note, the "English teacher acts as an all-purpose, surrogate audience...because curricular design forces writing out of context" (266) (italics mine). It is this excommunication of text from context, and the surrogacy of audience that subsequently follows, that writing-for-publication seeks to displace in the classroom. By making publication a part of curricular design, we can authenticate purpose as well as audience for our students and significantly alter the discourse contexts in which they write.

There are certainly valid objections to the picture that I've thus far painted. Most of us can attest from experience that teachers regularly do speak from the engaged discourse of readership, frequently do read student texts authentically for the purpose of negotiating their meaning, and skillfully do help student writers flourish, all from an instructional meta-stance. So the question remains: why do we need to publish student writers?

To fully respond, I would like to slightly shift the discussion by broadening my theoretical domain to incorporate a sociolinguistic analytic as well as a "conversational" model of rhetoric. Analyzing the social discourse context in these more precise terms establishes a more complete theory of writing-for-publication that opens a range of important new questions for composition pedagogy.

Our experience at College X has made clear that writing-for-publication gives birth to a new social configuration for student writers. When students write for unknown audiences beyond the classroom-- a Freshman English publication, for instance-- they no longer write texts solely to have them coached, critiqued and improved qua text, but write to have their writing read by flesh and blood readers. In a context that creates communicative authenticity, students begin to fictionalize the properties of a genuine audience, the kind Ong talks about, rather than the existence of that audience. They begin, as well, to relate to their texts as writers

rather than pupils when they have the opportunity to transcend what they perceive as the strictly pedagogical judgement of a teacherly meta-response. When their work is published, student writers suddenly find themselves dwelling in the context of authentic social judgement, that place where real writers dwell.

A great deal has been written about the social construction of knowledge and what it means to initiate students into the academic conversation. A feature shared by the "conversational models" of rhetoric proposed by Charles Bazerman, Gregory Clark and, to a lesser degree, Patricia Bizzell and Kenneth Bruffee, is the central position that knowledge plays. Bazerman, for example, equates "discourse" in his conversational model almost exclusively with discourse content. He says,

> Writing occurs within the context of previous writing and advances the total sum of the discourse (italics mine). Earlier comments provide subjects at issue, factual content, ideas to work with and models of discourse appropriate to the subject. Later comments build on what came before...as they dispute particulars, redefine issues, add new materials, or otherwise shift the discussion. (658)

In this emphasis on content, Bazerman focuses on what gets constructed in rhetorical conversation. Gregory Clark argues similarly that "writing and reading [are] parts of the dialogical, dialectical process through which the shared knowledge that supports cooperation is collaboratively constructed" (33). He states that writing in a rhetorical conversation "contributes to a process sustained within a community to resolve the conflicts inherent in the distance that separates any state of knowledge and the constantly changing circumstances of those who share it" (42).

While Clark recognizes that a conversational "process" is involved, his dialogic model, like Bazerman's, nevertheless focuses primarily on negotiated states of knowledge rather than the linguistic dynamics of that negotiation. The essence of this focus is perhaps best captured by Patricia Bizzell's call for a composition instruction that will serve to "demystify [for students] the institutional structure of knowledge" (196), a call I would like to expand to include a composition theory that serves to demystify for teachers the linguistic channels by which knowledge is constructed. My point is that knowledge isn't purely a social semantic construct, as these theorists emphasize, but also a social conversational construct. This observation raises questions about the precise status of a construct such as Bruffee's "Conversation of Mankind": can such a monolithic cultural form exist linguistically? If so, how do people behave when they are engaged in it? What contextual variables mark the discourse as conversational? How, specifically, is it conversation? And how do students with restricted codes, cultural 'deficits' and linguistic deviation engage in it?

One problem in defining a discourse community solely in terms of propositional content and historical-cultural knowledge is the tendency to conflate content and form, and the failure to distinguish the topic of conversation, i.e. what gets talked about (or in this case, written about), from the social configuration that surrounds the conversation, i.e. how participants arrange themselves to talk (or write). In the analysis of spoken discourse, linguists treat these as linguistically distinct processes that require distinct analytics, the first typically falling under the rubric of discourse analysis, the second under the rubric of conversational analysis. Recognizing these two threads enables us to distinguish Bruffee's monolithic historical-cultural "Conversation" as something quite separate from the locally-managed interactive "conversation" that exists in a temporal-spatial continuum

marked by utterance and response, i.e. our classrooms. By exposing the variables in the local, social discourse of our classrooms, we can begin to under-stand more realistically the conditions for knowing that our students confront.

What all of this points to is less the social construction of knowledge, per se, than the social construction of the conversation in which knowledge is configured. The social forms of knowledge have received considerable attention, but the local forms of rhetorical conversation that take shape in particular linguistic contexts have received very little. To accomplish this, we must shift focus from "the" monolithic cultural "Conversation of Mankind" (singular) to a more contextualized sense of local "conversations" (plural) as they are socially situated in local discourse communities.

To fully articulate a theory of writing-for-publication based on a conversational model, I would like to turn to a sociolinguistic framework. In the rhetorical conversational models I've cited (Clark; Bruffee; Bazerman; Bizzell), "conversation" is used primarily as a metaphor to signify the exchanges, modifications and topic continuity that characterize textual communication in a discourse community. While a metaphor for textual communication is highly suggestive, I prefer the stronger assumption that the relation between writing and conversation is not metaphoric but isomorphic; that is, textual communication is not like social conversation, it is social conversation. Following this assumption, we can examine rhetorical conversation in explicitly sociolinguistic terms and seek to identify the abstract conversational structure that both written and spoken forms of discourse share.

As sociolinguist John Gumperz points out, conversation is a form of communication, which he defines as:

> a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of

> two or more individuals. Mere talk to produce sentences, no matter how well formed or elegant, does not by itself constitute communication. Only when a move has elicited a response can we say communication is taking place. To participate in such verbal exchange...is to create and sustain conversational involvement. (italics mine) (Gumperz 1)

Let me re-emphasize Gumperz's words: "Mere talk to produce sentences... does not by itself constitute communication. Only when a move has elicited a response can we say communication is taking place." Sociolinguists call this "reciprocity," the principle of give-and-take/move-and-response that governs normal social conversation. In Robin Lakoff's words, reciprocity means, in part, that all participants in social conversation are "able to do the same things, and [that their] similar contributions are always understood similarly" (Lakoff 27). In a fully reciprocal conversation, whether spoken or written, participants have a kind of mutual equity concerning their responses. If one speaker can ask a question, shout an obscenity or choose to remain silent, then other speakers have the same reciprocal privilege in turn. The success of social conversation is partly contingent on the fact that conditions of reciprocity are satisfied.

A reciprocal conversation is also described sociolinguistic-ally in terms of the symmetrical or asymmetrical relations that hold between participants. In a symmetrical relation, all speakers are equally empowered to make meaningful contributions. In an asymmetrical relation, one speaker is empowered in ways that others aren't. Successful social conversation is usually characterized by reciprocal and symmetrical relations. Violations of symmetrical reciprocity can have

interesting consequences on social interaction. We've all had the experience of being cornered by a speaker who won't let anyone get a word in edgewise. When someone dominates the floor like this, participants often seek to disengage. Because the relation is asymmetrical, non-speaking participants are denied the opportunity to contribute to the conversation and thus lose interest.

Reciprocity and symmetry introduce important structural properties of social conversation that can be used to examine the shape of local discourse activities that characterize the rhetorical contexts in our classrooms. Disregarding for a moment the cultural content of the texts that student writers write, we might ask: how 'conversational' is the discourse configuration we provide for them, by which I mean, how symmetrical are relations between student writers and their readers, and how satisfying do participants find those relations?

Using Britton's study as a reference point, we might conclude that most school writing-- over 95% in Britton's data-- is structurally asymmetrical: teachers are, and students are not empowered to make certain moves in classroom discourse. When students write and teachers meta-read, we have an example of conversation that is neither negotiable nor symmetrical, two facts that significantly effect communicative conditions. Students know very well when their texts are going to be meta-read on material rather than phenomenological grounds and understand quite clearly what contributions they are empowered (or not empowered) to make in the communicative circuit.

Assuming, still, that our objective in Freshman English is to initiate students into the academic conversation, we must ask: to what extent do such highly asymmetrical configurations in our classrooms support the communicative and conversational principles we want our students to learn? If we provide

nothing of the communicative structure for genuine rhetorical conversation, how can we claim to be initiating students into anything like an academic conversation?

It's commonly assumed that students write meaningful, engaged discourse when they are motivated to write it, just as speakers engage in social conversation when they find it socially satisfying. As sociolinguists describe it, conversational success is a function of participants feeling as if they're contributing to as well as getting something from the conversation. When speakers feel neither, they typically lose motivation to participate.

At College X, one of the most notable aspects of our writing-for-publication program in Freshman English has been an extremely positive student response. When students write-for-publication, they seem to continually surprise themselves, not only at the texts they produce but also at the depths and intricacies of the composing processes they discover. One Freshman writer recently said to me, "I never thought revising something seventeen times was possible until I wanted to get it published," a comment that might be interpreted as a function of symmetrical reciprocity: only when he felt he was getting something from the exchange was he willing to contribute something to the process.

Pedagogically, writing-for-publication reinforces a context-bound theory of discourse. If our goal is to demystify academic discourse for students, as Patricia Bizzell claims, we must ask whether writing-for-publication fosters, in her words, "productive critical distance on the social processes whereby knowledge is generated and controlled" (197). It is my contention that when students write for real readers, they enter symmetrically reciprocal relations and participate in the social processes that Bizzell refers to, thus enabling a unique kind of critical distance on social processes. Instead of teaching students about the treacheries of violating cultural presuppositions and linguistic conventions, for instance,

writing-for-publication enables students to learn to negotiate those presuppositions and conventions in an authentic communicative context. Making a discourse move that connects with or offends readers is a very different experience from being told that such a discourse move might connect with or offend readers.

The theory of writing-for-publication I'm proposing is partially grounded in theories of language acquisition that assume initiation into a discourse community is linguistically a function of a speaker's immersion in social situations where he or she can make inferences based on observed patterns of linguistic interaction. To support language learning, it is important that writers, as rhetors, enter contexts where interactive negotiation and authentic 'move/response' relations occur. As language learners, they must be immersed in social situations where they can make inferences about discourse strategies and patterns based on observed patterns of linguistic and rhetorical interaction. Just as children gain competence in their native language by engaging in symmetrically reciprocal social conversation with fluent, adult native speakers, so do writers. This is not to claim that symmetrical discourse relations are a sufficient condition for gaining fluency in written language, only that symmetrical discourse relations are a necessary condition. One of my purposes has been to make clear that these symmetrical conditions are absent in an asymmetrical classroom configuration where students write, peers critique, teachers grade, and essays die in file drawers and recycling bins. By publishing student writers, we emphasize the communicative purpose of writing and reinstate the socially symmetrical conditions that invite students to participate in the academic discourse community.

Rather than teaching our students, as Clark suggests, that "writing and reading are both public acts that carry with them significant social responsibility" (68), writing-for-publication allows students to experience writing and reading as

public acts that carry significant social responsibility. Publishing creates a social context where students learn about by learning from the social consequences that their discourse moves generate.

In the aggregate, writing-for-publication helps students accommodate written text to audiences, learn that writing must affect a reader, gain information about how readers respond, and understand how writing is evaluated. Rather than creating written discourse that is more informal, "chatty" or conversational in form, we've observed that published student discourse reflects increasingly solid academic competence. Our students write and publish thoughtful, serious essays in forms accepted by the broader academic discourse community they seek to join. In this regard, publication appears to remain a function of the classroom discourse that subsumes it. In other words, students do learn something of what we teach, and, when given an opportunity to enter a genuinely social discourse, a great deal more.

Writing-for-publication is not a new idea nor an idea that has been very thoroughly researched. A host of literacy theorists, including Donald Graves, James Moffett, Nancy Atwell and Lucy Calkins, among others, advocate writing-for-publication in the elementary and middle school curriculum, but virtually no serious discussion exists concerning writing-for-publication in the college curriculum. Following middle school, both spoken and written discussion about writing-for-publication seems to mysteriously disappear until it surfaces again in graduate school seminars where professors announce the familiar expectation that students write papers of "publishable quality," an expectation that frequently remains little more than an expectation, by the way, instead of a systematic realization.

Many theorists acknowledge that publication ought to occur in the composition classroom, but there is no coherent theory that explains the dynamics of writing-for-publication or the reasons why it ought to occur. Existing arguments are based almost exclusively on outcomes: student writers should be published, they claim, because the public transmission of written discourse creates a sense of authorship that motivates intellectual commitment and encourages writing, fluency and language growth. While such reasoning is absolutely sound, and while such results occur with surprising regularity, there has been no framework for explaining why these positive outcomes accrue. In these pages, I have attempted to treat publication as something more than a pragmatic corollary to composition pedagogy by crafting a theoretical framework that will explain writing-for-publication in and of itself as a vital contribution to audience models in composition theory and pedagogy. Authentic audiences do exist-- in our classrooms, in our departments, on our campuses. If we broaden our sense of discourse context to include them, students begin to write to communicate authentic purposes to authentic audiences and thereby create the moving, unfamiliar and deeply insightful pieces that we, as readers, so eagerly embrace.

Publishing Student Writers: A Pragmatics

Given everything I've said thus far, the next question might be: Okay. So how do we go about publishing student writers? To understand the pragmatics of publication in either the classroom or the composition program, we might begin by assuming that any written or spoken public display of completed text, i.e. text no longer deemed "in-process," is a form of publication. Thus, any arrangement that

enables readers to publicly or privately experience the completed text-- listen to its voice, respond to its meaning, enter its textual space-- instead of simply "fix" or somehow improve the text, supports this goal.

At College X, our publishing program has evolved into Choice Voice, a quarterly publication of our Freshman composition program that contains narrative, expository and argumentative essays written by students enrolled in English 101 write. It certainly isn't a new idea to create a departmental publication devoted exclusively to Freshman writing. Across the country, they have cropped up in unique forms distinct from the college literary magazine that most departments already publish. A Freshman English publication finds a large, eager and willing audience--in our case, approximately 400-600 students who enroll each quarter in English 101-- that sustains a viable community of writers and readers.

What is perhaps a new idea in our venture is the fact that Choice Voice is an entirely peer-edited publication. All submissions are read and selected by an editorial board composed exclusively of students also enrolled in Freshman English. Editors are nominated by their teachers by two criteria: they like to read, and they like to talk about what they read. Two facts are worth noting here: one is that a peer-review process relieves faculty of the "burden" of editorial tasks and, two, is that students don't find such tasks a burden. Rather than loathing the prospect of reading and judging a stack of submissions, student editors embrace the idea and consequently engage in editorial debate that is lively, diverse and committed, with results that are always interesting. It is a telling fact, I believe, that since we started Choice Voice on a peer-review basis in 1989, a growing number of our Choice Voice editors have changed their major to English, not just from "Undecided", but also from Art, Computer Science and Business.

On the practical side, publication doesn't require extensive hardware or financing. A bulletin board and staples are an effective way to start. A data file on the campus computer network is invaluable. A desk-top publishing arrangement is a gift, but certainly not a necessity. During our first three years, we "published" Choice Voice three times a quarter by stapling dot-matrix print-outs to two bulletin boards, one in the Writing Lab and one in the English department, where readers could stand in the hallway and linger as they read. When we started to electronically publish Choice Voice on the campus computer network, students began to read essays at terminals across campus at no trouble or expense. Teachers have found it easy and useful to assign Choice Voice essays for students to read during the early invention stages of a writing project when students are most uncertain about essay and genre possibilities. Again and again, students report how much they learn from reading Choice Voice essays written by students who recently occupied the same desks they now occupy. The thought that their work might be similarly read is a significant motivating factor for students embarking on a writing project. From the beginning, the idea of getting published seems to reduce or eliminate the thematic prominence of the teacher's evaluative meta-stance. Once students understand that they are fictionalizing a genuine audience of readers, they, quite frankly, just take off. And when a class member's work is selected to appear in Choice Voice, the class collectively feels applauds. Each of them has come to know, indeed, the sweat that attends success.

The forms that publication can take are infinite: Freshman English magazines, classroom anthologies, departmental collections or any other form that can be distributed to doctor's offices, local libraries, book stores and coffeehouse reading racks as well as "staged" at Freshman English Readings in the Lecture Hall. Each quarter we schedule a Choice Voice Celebration Reading where student

writers read their work to an audience of 75-100 (including students, faculty and administration) purely for the purpose of celebrating what they've written.

The cost of our publishing venture at College X has not been excessive. Relying on a combination of shrewd instinct and the kindness of strangers, we've been able to produce a quality publication that students covet. Our department's quarterly contribution of $75 is matched by the Public Relations office. With that funding, we are able to publish 250 issues of Choice Voice (a number we would like to double) on reasonably good quality of paper with a sturdy cover. We use the desk-top publishing resources on campus, xerox copies in our campus copy shop, and employ the Choice Voice editorial board to staple and distribute, including a classroom set available for teacher loan.

In the end, the principle of writing-for-publication seems far more important than the form it takes. To repeat John Gumperz: "Mere talk to produce sentences does not by itself constitute communication. Only when a move has elicited a response can we say communication is taking place" (1). In authentic written communication-- writers writing for readers who actually read their words-- students learn to negotiate membership in a discourse community. Only when we open the channel for genuinely communicative discourse, shift the rhetorical stance that readers bring to texts, and create a configuration where conversational 'moves' elicit conversational 'responses,' can we claim that students are in fact writing in our Freshman composition classes.

In closing, I would like to note the extent that writing-for-publication has strengthened our sense of discourse community at College X, not only among students but also among faculty. As student writing becomes authentically communicative and students understand their need to solve genuine rhetorical problems, not just fictional ones, the classroom attitude toward 'instruction' shifts.

As the relationship between teacher and students becomes newly collaborative and all participants feel like they're contributing to and getting something from the conversation, both teacher and students find renewed motivation to participate. As you might expect, teachers begin to celebrate themselves when they see their students' work published.

Writing-for-publication suggests important new ways to extend composition pedagogy. It does not eliminate the evaluative meta-stance or the presence of an analytic teaching rhetoric but extends both by instantiating audience and purpose within the classroom. In this regard, writing-for-publication acknowledges and supplements rather than displaces established curricular objectives, whatever shape or form they might take. It offers the first venue I've seen where teachers in strongly opposed philosophical camps find mutual agreement and support. Whether one's pedagogical focus is primarily social or primarily textual, a process-oriented publishing classroom delivers a rhetorically situated model of composing that demystifies itself by erasing the fiction of the "double bind," that maddening circle of the false audience that we, as teachers, must pretend to be and, at the same time, cannot be. Instead of asking our students to pretend to write in "dummy runs," we can create rhetorical forms of conversation that truly invite the "new kids on the block" to have a turn to talk. By plugging student writers into a communicative circuit where readers respond to their writing, they learn to write as speakers learn to speak, by participating in a rhetorical conversation through socially purposeful utterance and response. In the end, that is why we need to publish student writers.

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